

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PORT O 01671 261450Z

42

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 NEA-10 SCEM-02 COME-00 INT-08

TRSE-00 OMB-01 SCI-06 CIEP-02 STR-08 FAA-00 IO-14

AID-20 DRC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 SSO-00

NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 (ISO) W
----- 093044

O R 261405Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5886

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 1671

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN TD US

SUBJ: CIVAIR: EASTERN AIRLINES ABRUPTLY ORDERED TO TERMINATE
ITS SECOND FREQUENCY TO TRINIDAD

REF: POS 1668; POS 1670

SUMMARY: EASTERN RECEIVED WORD FROM GOTT DECEMBER 23 TO TERMINATE
ITS SECOND FREQUENCY TO TRINIDAD EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 28, A DECISION
WHICH EASTERN'S REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE BELIEVES IS SPARKED
BY GOTT CONCERNS FOR BWIA'S COMPETITIVENESS. EASTERN PLANNED
TO CANCEL THIS FREQUENCY ANYWAY ON JANUARY 7, AND HAS ASKED
EMBASSY TO INTERVENE WITH PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE WITH
REQUEST THAT ORDER BE RESCINDED UNTIL LATTER DATE. EMBASSY
HAS ASKED FOREIGN MINISTRY FOR EXPLANATION OF GOTT'S DECISION
AND WILL PURSUE MATTER FURTHER DESPITE UNLIKELIHOOD OF
FAVORABLE RESULT. END SUMMARY

1. ERROL HINDS, EASTERN AIRLINES' REGIONAL MANAGER STATIONED
IN BARBADOS, INFORMED EMBASSY DECEMBER 24 THAT GOTT HAD,
ABRUPTLY AND WITHOUT EXPLANATION, ORDERED EASTERN TO CEASE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PORT O 01671 261450Z

ITS SECOND DAILY FREQUENCY TO PORT OF SPAIN, EFFECTIVE

DECEMBER 28. HINDS SAID HE RECEIVED THIS NEWS ON DECEMBER 23 IN A LETTER DATED DECEMBER 21, AND THAT HE IMMEDIATELY FLEW TO TRINIDAD TO INVESTIGATE MATTER. HE SAID HE WAS INFORMED BY HEAD OF GOTT'S AIR TRANSPORT LICENSING AUTHORITY (ATLA) THAT ORDER "HAD COME DIRECTLY FROM PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE," AND THAT THERE WAS NOTHING ATLA COULD DO. ANOTHER SOURCE TOLD HINDS THAT PRIME MINISTER'S ORIGINAL INTENT WAS THAT EASTERN CANCEL THIS FREQUENCY WITHIN 36 HOURS, BUT THAT UNNAMED ADVISERS HAD INTERCEDED AND OBTAINED SEVEN DAYS' GRACE.

2. HINDS TOLD THE EMBASSY HE BELIVES THAT GOTT'S CONCERN FOR BWIA'S COMPETITIVE POSITION IS BEHIND THIS ORDER, ESPECIALLY SINCE HE HAS BEEN TOLD THAT BWIA CHAIRMAN (AND CLOSE ADVISER OF PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS) DODDRIDGE ALLEYNE IS RESPONSIBLE. ACCORDING TO HINDS, EASTERN PLANS TO CANCEL THIS FREQUENCY ANYWAY ON JANUARY 7, A FACT WHICH HE BELIEVES HAD NOT REACHED DECISION-MAKING LEVELS OF GOTT PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF ARBITRARY ORDER. HINDS HAS ASKED THAT EMBASSY INTERVENE AT LEVEL OF PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND REQUEST THAT CANCELLATION ORDER BE AMENDED TO PERMIT FLIGHTS THROUGH JANUARY 7, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF HARDSHIP FACED BY EASTERN IF FORCED TO ALTER ALREADY CONFIRMED PASSENGER RESERVATIONS AND CREW/PLANE TURNAROUND PLANS.

3. IMMEDIATELY UPON HEARING FROM HINDS, EMBASSY REQUESTED FROM MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM AND RATIONALE FOR GOTT'S ORDER. IN VIEW OF SHORT TIME REMAINING, EMBASSY WILL PURSUE MATTER VIGOROUSLY THROUGH WHATEVER APPROPRIATE AVENUES AVAILABLE. SINCE TODAY IS HOLIDAY (BOXING DAY) AND DODDRIDGE ALLEYNE IS OUT OF THE COUNTRY, WE HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US.

4. COMMENT: FOLLOWING EASTERN'S TAKEOVER OF CARIBAIR, EASTERN NEGOTIATED A PROVISIONAL LICENSE WITH THE GOTT EFFECTIVE OCTOBER, 1973. THAT LICENSE PERMITTED ONE FREQUENCY PER DAY, WHICH EASTERN HAS BEEN ROUTING BALTIMORE/SAN JUAN/BARBADOS/POS AND RETURN. AT THE END OF NOVEMBER, EASTERN SENT THE GOTT A SCHEDULE SHOWING A SECOND DAILY FREQUENCY--SAN JUAN/ST. MAARTEN/ ALTERNATING MARTINIQUE AND GUADELOUPE/ST. LUCIA/POS AND RETURN. AFTER OPERATING A FEW FLIGHTS ON THIS SECOND FREQUENCY, EASTERN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT O 01671 261450Z

WAS TOLD TO STOP BY THE GOTT SINCE PERMISSION HAD NEVER BEEN REQUESTED FORMALLY. AT THAT TIME, HINDS FLEW TO TRINIDAD AND MADE A WRITTEN REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO OPERATE THE SECOND FREQUENCY, WHICH WAS PROMPTLY GRANTED. WHEN EASTERN MADE ITS INITIAL LICENSE APPLICATION, BWIA REPORTEDLY WITHDREW ITS THREATENED OPPOSITION TO EASTERN'S APPLICATION IN EXCHANGE FOR ASSURANCES THAT BWIA WOULD NOT LOSE TRAFFIC FED IT BY EASTERN IN MIAMI, AND EASTERN ALSO AGREED TO USE BWIA GROUND HANDLING

SERVICES AT APIARCO. HINDS DENIES THAT ANY OTHER UNDERSTANDING WAS REACHED OR THAT BWIA HAS ANY REASON TO FEEL BETRAYED BY EASTERN'S ADDITION OF A SECOND FREQUENCY TO TRINIDAD, BUT HE ADMITS THAT EASTERN'S FIRST FREQUENCY IS DIRECTLY COMPETITIVE WITH BWIA. (IRONICALLY, THE ISLAND-HOPPING SECOND FREQUENCY WHICH THE GOTT HAS ORDERED TERMINATED DOES NOT OPERATE IN COMPETITION WITH BWIA.) HINDS ALSO DENIES THAT EASTERN HAS INDULGED IN ANY UNDUE EXPLOITATION OF FUEL AVAILABILITY AT PIARCO (A SCORE POINT WITH THE GOTT--SEE POS 1670), AND SAYS THAT ON MANY OCCASIONS ITS AIRCRAFT WHICH OVERNIGHTED AT PIARCO HAD TAKEN ON ENOUGH FUEL IN BARBADOS TO RETURN THERE FOR REFUELING THE NEXT DAY. NEVERTHELESS, IN VIEW OF RAPID ISSUANCE OF GOTT DECISION FOLLOWING PRIME MINISTER'S DECEMBER 20 SPEECH (A REPORT THAT EASTERN HAD BEEN ASKED TO TERMINATE ITS SECOND FREQUENCY WAS SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN AN ARTICLE DEALING WITH AVIATION FUEL REGULATIONS IN THE DECEMBER 22 MORNING PRESS), EMBASSY IS NOT SANGUINE THAT ANY RELIEF CAN BE OBTAINED FROM ORDER WHICH APPEARS TO BE RESULT OF SOME SORT OF DEEP-SEATED FEELINGS AT HIGHEST LEVEL OF GOTT. MARSHALL

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